

**Town of Arlington
Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**

Wednesday, November 14, 2001 7:20 PM

Committee members present: Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Ralph Elwell, Larry Englisher, Alan McClennen, Lt. Jim McHugh, Scott Smith, Ed Starr

Others: Stephen Makolka, Charles Crevo, Steve O’Riordan, Steve Delbanco, Ray Bradley, Paolo Marinelli.

Minutes from 10/17 and 11/01

The minutes of these meetings were approved unanimously.

Oak Hill Drive

Jim McHugh presented the police department report. Peak hour travel on Oak Hill Drive is approximately 100 – 120 cars in each direction. 85th percentile speeds are 39 MPH northbound, and 24 MPH southbound.

Discussion centered around speed control on Oak Hill, and the crosswalk at Summer Street. Four-way stops at Woodside and Joyce would not be appropriate because the sight lines are reasonable, there has only been one crash (at Woodside) in the past 10 years, and traffic volumes are below those in the guidelines for 4-way stops. Arlington DPW also believes that 4-way stops would not be appropriate at this intersection. The use of speed humps was also discussed as a future possibility. We noted that although a yellow center line was previously approved (in 1957), use of a center line is not likely to reduce speeds.

The crosswalk at Summer Street was considered a serious pedestrian issue. Ideas for alleviating this included

- ?? Crossing island on Summer Street (this would require substantial engineering and expense)
- ?? Improved crosswalk warning signs, including a warning bollard in the middle of Summer Street. Jim noted that these bollards are often knocked over, and would have to be removed during the winter.
- ?? Improved crosswalk markings, with a more durable, reflective coating
- ?? Extending the sidewalk on the north side of Summer Street to the traffic signal at Brattle Street. We noted that this would not help pedestrians who are traveling to the high school, but would be helpful to students going to Ottoson.

The committee adopted the following recommendations, all targeted towards improving safety:

- 1. Increase enforcement, targeted towards northbound traffic during afternoon commuter hours.**

- 2. Post crosswalk warning signs on Summer Street, and place a warning sign (bollard) in the middle of the crosswalk.**
- 3. Improve visibility of the crosswalk, possibly through reflectorized paint or thermoplastic.**
- 4. Move the existing speed limit sign for northbound vehicles, to a more visible location.**
- 5. Extend the sidewalk on the north side of Summer Street to the traffic signal at Brattle Street.**
- 6. Have the town prepare for use of traffic calming measures such as speed humps with possible future application on Oak Hill Drive.**

Alan departed during the Oak Hill discussion. This discussion finished at about 8:30.

Approaches to Route 60 / Mass Ave / Park Avenue area:

Points made during the discussion include the following:

- Major congestion areas are southbound Mystic Street leading to Mass Ave in the morning. In the evening it is Pleasant to Mass Ave northbound. Before restrictions were placed on Venner Road, people used Venner/Pleasant View/Jason to avoid the congestion. Now they use Spring and Jason.
- About 20 years ago, residents were concerned about excessive speed on Pleasant Street. As a result, the street was narrowed.
- The problem starts with congestion on State roads, such as Route 16 and Route 60
- Near term, the symptoms are appearing as neighborhood problems, calling for quick action.

What to do? The first step is to gather information. A number of traffic counts have been done already, but they need to be organized in a manner that is easily accessible. However, there is little origin-destination information. License plate surveys may help there. We need to know origin-destination information to assess the impact of possible new development (e.g. Belmont Uplands) and transportation improvements.

Traffic measurement equipment

Jim McHugh reported that the town currently has one machine to measure speed and volume. The town is looking at buying 2 to 4 machines. It would also be desirable to instrument a few existing loop detectors, so year-round information becomes available at a few locations. Ray Bradley offered to assist in this area, an offer that was gratefully accepted. Scott pointed out that with the increased data gathering capability, there is a greater need to store and organize the information so that it is easily accessible.

Survey status

For the vision 2020 survey, we agreed to suggest questions 1 and 10 from the Town Day

survey. Larry Englisher will send an e-mail to Jane Howard.

Louis Berger Group (LBG) projects

Charles Crevo reported on progress for the Mass Ave corridor study. We agreed to schedule a special meeting with TAC and LBG in December or (more likely) early January to review the preliminary results. We noted that the corridor study would likely result in one or more Town Meeting warrants, therefore it would be inadvisable to delay reviewing the study.

Criteria for TAC decisions

After some discussion, we agreed that the criteria could be sent to the Selectmen (marked as draft). The draft criteria are listed below:

Safety: Most important. Includes all forms of crashes. In general, vehicle/pedestrian accidents are more deadly and therefore have the highest priority. Sensitivity is needed to the special needs of children, seniors, and the handicapped.

Further, any proposed changes should not hinder the effective movement of emergency service organizations such as police, fire, and emergency medical.

Mobility: We must enable both people and goods to move around and through the town safely, and with a reasonable efficiency. Mobility includes all forms of transportation: vehicles, pedestrians, public transportation, and bicycles.

Equity: All must be treated equally given equal conditions. If we recommend a change that moves traffic from one area to other areas, does the overall net benefit to Arlington justify doing this? If so, are there things that should be done to help the impacted areas?

Further, if we recommend something (such as new stop signs) for one neighborhood, are we prepared to do the same thing for all neighborhoods facing a similar situation? This leads to a related criteria, PRECEDENCE. Is an action consistent with previous actions?

Probability of Success: Changes should have a high probability of success. All solutions will be compromises, but there should be as much information as practical on the net results of a significant change using baseline data.

If the success is in question, recommend an incremental approach that allows an experimental determination of traffic behavior.

Environment : The overall goal is to improve the quality of life in Arlington. Vehicles and parking lots have a large impact, but they are also an important part of American life. Things that improve the effectiveness of lower impact forms of transportation should be encouraged, other issues being equal.

Democracy: Local opinions about a change, including all impacted areas, are to be obtained in an objective way. If this opinion is against the change, the overall impact of the change to Arlington must be very positive to proceed.

Priority: Given the number of transportation issues that Arlington is facing, we will need to be sure that the town is working on the high priority issues. From the criteria above, is this a critical issue for Arlington? Every recommended action has both a direct cost and an opportunity cost; if we ask that

substantial Town resources be applied for one transportation problem, it means another Town problem will, necessarily, receive lower priority.

Stop sign installation criteria

For all-way stops, the criteria proposed by LBG were adopted, with one change (one criterion in E was dropped). With the introductory sentences supplied by LBG, the criteria as adopted are as follows:

These guidelines for the installation of all-way stop control for intersections have been specifically developed for the Town of Arlington. They are based on guidance provided in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control, field experience, and engineering judgment.

Criteria

- A. Is this an interim measure for a traffic light?
- B. More than 5 crashes in a year?
- C. Both streets have moderate volumes (at least 200 cars/hour on the less traveled street and 500 cars/hour combined)
- D. Criteria B and C are almost met (80%)
- E. Additional criteria:
 - substantial left turn conflicts (Product of left turns multiplied by opposing turn through-volume larger than 25,000 (cars/hour)²)
 - near a major pedestrian generator and the intersection has painted crosswalks
 - any sight distance less than 125 feet

An All-way stop should be considered if one of A, B, C, or D criteria is satisfied.

An All-way stop may be considered if one among the E criteria is satisfied

Jack Hurd arrived during this discussion.

For two-way stops, we agreed to use the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) criteria.

Crosswalk installation criteria

We agreed to ask Arlington DPW to work with LBG to develop criteria for crosswalk installation.

TAC Web Site

The group briefly discussed what should appear on the TAC web site, ideas included

- Links to other sites of interest
- Process for citizens to raise transportation issues. Jack Hurd said it would be fine to use his e-mail message of 11/14 as a basis for this.
- A form where anyone can submit comments
- TAC meeting agendas

Steve Makolka asked that agendas be posted. We agreed that draft TAC meeting agendas will be posted on the TAC web site, with a link from the Town Web site.

Process for addressing neighborhood issues

The TAC does not have the resources to hold public hearings on every neighborhood issue. However, our meetings are open, and it is often helpful to have the proponents from the neighborhood available to answer questions when a particular neighborhood is being discussed.

The appointed working groups should be working with the proponents from the neighborhoods. Since Jim McHugh has already been arranging meetings with neighborhood groups as part of the process, attendance by other TAC members and DPW would be helpful at these meetings. We agreed that Jim will make sure the rest of TAC knows about neighborhood meetings that the police department arranges on issues that have been assigned to TAC.

Work processes

We are concerned that we are spending too much time on local issues, while many problems require a regional focus. Jack Hurd mentioned that Luisa Paiewonsky, the Director of Transportation Planning and Development for Mass Highway, might be available for a meeting. She is an Arlington resident. Ralph suggested hosting a regional conference.

TAC meetings in 2002

The best time for future meetings in 2002 will be the third Tuesday of each month, at 7:15 PM. Ed will reserve a room. However, our next meeting will remain on Wednesday, December 19th.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 PM.

MEETING HANDOUTS

Agenda packet, including agenda, eight step recommended process, thoughts on Pleasant/Mass/Park/Concord Turnpike project, decision criteria, 4-way stop criteria, strawman work organization strategy – from Ed Starr

Minutes from 10/17 and 11/1 – from Scott Smith

Concord Transportation Study – from Ed Starr

Oak Hill Drive safety status report – from Jim McHugh